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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 001053

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IR](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: WAC PRESIDENT ON IRAN AND THE AHMADINEJAD VISIT TO  
BAKU

REF: A. BAKU 608

[1](#)B. BAKU 880

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Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Speaking with Embassy Iran Watcher on August 22, World Azerbaijanis Congress (WAC) President Ghulamriza Sabri-Tabrizi said that Iranian President Ahmadinejad's August 21-22 visit to Baku was driven by domestic political considerations and a desire to ensure that Azerbaijan prevents U.S. forces from being based there. Tabrizi also said the Government of Azerbaijan (GOAJ) had given quiet approval for the WAC and others to protest Ahmadinejad's visit. Tabrizi added that Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev had congratulated him on his recent election and indicated that he (Aliyev) was interested in "working with the U.S. on Iran." Tabrizi said that his overwhelming victory over his two closest contenders for president symbolized the end of the Azerbaijani Presidential Apparatus's influence over WAC. Tabrizi, who continued to be upbeat about cooperation with other Azeri diaspora groups, said that he would move the headquarters of the WAC to London, in part to increase access to the Iranian diaspora. End Summary.

Tabrizi on the Ahmadinejad Visit  
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[1](#)2. (C) World Azerbaijanis Congress President Ghulamriza Sabri-Tabrizi told Iran Watcher on August 22 that the purpose of Iranian President Ahmadinejad's insistence on his August 21-22 visit to Baku was two-fold, driven by Iranian domestic political considerations and a desire to ensure that Azerbaijan continued to prevent U.S. forces from being based there. Saying that Ahmadinejad was losing support inside Iran due to his failure to deliver on campaign promises to improve Iran's economy, Tabrizi said that Ahmadinejad's foreign visits were part of an effort to quell internal discontent by "appearing to be doing something." Tabrizi also said that the regime in Tehran is paranoid about U.S. encirclement, desperate to ensure that neighboring countries will not allow U.S. forces to be based there.

[1](#)3. (C) Tabrizi said that the Government of Azerbaijan (GOAJ) had privately granted permission for the WAC and SANAM to demonstrate in front of the Iranian Embassy August 22, to protest Ahmadinejad's visit. (Small groups, including Azerbaijani ANIP opposition party, regularly protest in front of the Iranian Embassy.) Tabrizi added that he had been assured that all "detained" protesters would be released

shortly after their "arrest."

#### Insights Into President Aliyev's Thinking on Iran

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¶4. (C) Tabrizi noted that Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev had recently called him to congratulate him on his recent election. According to Tabrizi, Aliyev expressed his happiness that such a "trusted friend" of his father's had been elected to the post. However, Aliyev reportedly also pointed out that while the WAC had his firm support, it was essential that this fact "remain private" so as "not to be seen as meddling with Iran's internal affairs." According to Tabrizi, Aliyev said he was interested in "working with the U.S. on Iran."

¶5. (C) Tabrizi said that his overwhelming victory over his two closest contenders for president - former WAC President Javad Derakhti and Eldar Qaradagli, by a vote of 12-to-4, symbolized the end of the Azerbaijani Presidential Apparat's influence (and that of Presidential Advisors Ramiz Mehdiyev and Ali Hasanov) over the organization. Describing Mehdiyev and Hasanov as "Pro-Russians with no interest in the plight of South Azerbaijanis," Tabrizi said that Derakhti and Qaradagli's lack of support from the WAC membership was a clear repudiation of Mehdiyev and Hasanov's influence. Tabrizi commented that Aliyev is "walled in by Mehdiyev." Tabrizi, who said that he maintains regular contact with First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, also commented that he had "high hopes for Ms. Aliyeva and that she might consider him (Tabrizi) to be her foreign policy advisor."

#### Promising Signs Vis-a-Vis Other Azeri Diaspora Groups?

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¶6. (C) Tabrizi said that he was optimistic that cooperation

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with other Azeri diaspora groups would be forthcoming, indicating that among others, South Azerbaijan National Awakening Movement (SANAM) President Mahmud Chohragani had contacted him to offer congratulations and discuss possible areas of cooperation. According to Tabrizi, the Demokratik Dunya Azerbaijan Kongresi (DDAK), headed by Ahmad Obali, and the National Parliament of South Azerbaijanis (a Norway-based Azeri diaspora group headed by "Boyuk Bey") had also contacted Tabrizi to express their willingness to "join the WAC." (Note: DDAK is a North America-based faction of the WAC that reportedly broke off from the WAC a number of years ago; DDAK head Obali also runs Chicago-based GunAz Television.)

¶7. (C) Tabrizi plans to move the WAC's headquarters from Malmo, Sweden (home of former president Derakhti) to London, where Tabrizi lives. Tabrizi cited London's large Iranian diaspora community (with outreach opportunities to other Iranian diaspora groups) and safety as contributing factors for the move.

#### U.S. Outreach

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¶8. (C) Tabrizi, who reiterated his request for U.S. financial assistance to reinvigorate the WAC's activities (to be reported septel) said that he also was interested in working with the U.S. on Iran. Tabrizi plans to travel to Washington this fall as part of his overall outreach plans, and said that he is interested in meeting with State Department officials who deal with Iranian affairs. Tabrizi also hinted that he had again been contacted by the "Israelis, to include U.S. Jewish groups." (Note: U.S. Jewish groups maintain regular contact with the GOAJ and Azeri diaspora groups.)  
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